

Joint Stakeholder Conference
Joint Agency Task Force Overview & Update April 29, 2008



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STRUCTURE & LEADERSHIP

- Management and leadership infrastructure supporting the agriculture mission in Customs and Border Protection (CBP) should be staffed and empowered at levels equivalent to other functional mission areas in CBP.
- The stakeholders strongly urged a more robust chain of command with an agricultural presence at every management level.
- The Office of the Inspector General (OIG) made recommendations that CBP should have more supervisors with agriculture backgrounds.

Tasks:

- Review and reclassify CBP Headquarters APTL and Field Office Agriculture liaison positions and announce as multi-disciplinary.
- Improve/enhance recruitment and retention.
- Convene work group to determine more comprehensive structure for agriculture, identifying numbers and placement of Ag managers for port and Field Office (FO) locations.

Accomplishments:

- A group completed the review and reclassification of the position descriptions. Next step is to process through Human Resources. Subsequent announcements will be announced as multi-disciplinary.

EMERGENCY RESPONSE

- Stakeholders recommended a transparent, joint domestic emergency response plan.
- There is a need for:
 - A joint plan to deploy CBP or APHIS resources during an Ag-related emergency
 - Coordinated response plans for emergencies affecting operations.

Tasks:

- Identify, define, and classify Ag-related emergency events at Ports of Entry (POEs) where CBP resources could be utilized/deployed.
- Establish CBP Agriculture Specialist (CBPAS) staffing level guidelines for POEs to maintain core Ag inspectional functions during emergency responses.
- Develop standard operating procedure (SOP) for when significant pests are discovered at POEs.

Accomplishments:

- A joint Emergency Response protocol has been drafted and is currently being vetted through both agencies. The plan identifies the types of agriculture emergency events at ports of entry; and CBP's and APHIS' responses and responsibilities.
- The annex addressing staffing is completed and also being vetted.

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OUTREACH & COMMUNICATION

- Stakeholders, CBP, and APHIS recognize the need for better communication and information sharing at all levels.
- There is a need:
 - For better information sharing and communication between CBP and APHIS;
 - For CBP to establish forums to discuss issues with stakeholders; and,
 - For access to CBP officials by stakeholders to voice concerns.

Tasks:

- Include Ag outreach in joint plans.
- Seek opportunities to meet with stakeholders.
 - CBP HQ level, attend meetings with stakeholder organizations.
 - CBP FO level, continue to provide opportunities through port risk committees, meetings with State Plant Health Directors (SPHDs) and State Plant Regulatory Officials (SPROs).
 - Port of Entry level invitations to observe agriculture ops to stakeholder groups.
- Enhance/improve CBP website (to showcase agriculture activities).
- Create an annual CBP accomplishment report for stakeholders.
- Seek opportunities for press and publication featuring Ag-related activities, accomplishments, and responses.
- APHIS and CBP, when appropriate, will invite the other agency to attend local meetings.

Accomplishments:

- Created a collaborative calendar of known events.
- Establish annual communications plan.
- Establish national partnership council.
- National Stakeholder Meeting.

PEST IDENTIFICATION

- CBP and APHIS need a joint comprehensive plan to establish standards of service in pest identification, training, and discard authority.
- CBP and APHIS need to work more effectively to adopt meaningful performance measures for intercepting foreign pests and disease in all pathways
- The process of timely dissemination of agriculture pest alerts needs to be reviewed
- There is a need to enhance and coordinate pest identification training between APHIS and CBP

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Tasks:

- Standardize monthly pest ID reports for CBP.
- Implement a pest ID and detection liaison position to support and coordinate training and discard authorities.
- Develop performance measures for pest interceptions and review and evaluate Identifier tours of duty.
- Develop process for synoptic plant pest port collections.
- Develop and implement a joint method of communication for sharing pest interceptions interagency, intra-agency, or with stakeholders, as appropriate.

Accomplishments:

- Monthly pest ID reporting protocol in draft stage.
- Plant Protection and Quarantine (PPQ) Liaison Positions identified (Miami and Tucson FOs).
- APHIS has created ID-related performance measures.

RESOURCES

- Improve Ag mission delivery through transparent financial accountability for Agriculture Quarantine Inspection (AQI) resources and more effective and efficient programmatic and resource management of personnel, equipment, and supplies.
- APHIS and CBP need to ensure that accounting processes for agricultural functions are transparent.
- The Agencies need to improve the effectiveness and efficiency of the agriculture canine assets and enhance integration of APHIS expertise into CBP operations.
- CBP should ensure that recruitment and retention strategies include the utilization of all available tools.
- CBP should utilize a risk-based staffing model when determining deployment of agricultural staff.
- CBP should ensure that the necessary equipment and supplies and facilities are procured and made available in order to support the agriculture mission.

Tasks:

- Joint development of a risk-based staffing model.
- Institutionalize, by environment, a set of standards for types/kinds/amounts of equipment and supplies to support the agriculture component.
- APHIS and CBP enhance financial management system.
- Enhance the CBP Agriculture Canine Program.

Accomplishments:

- Held joint meetings on Staffing model. Group to be convened week of May 12.
- Equipment/supply national inventory completed. Budget allocated for procurement.
- Port level supply/resource list completed and forwarded.
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JOINT AGENCY PLANNING

- There is a need for an effective joint planning effort to ensure that both Agencies are jointly placing priority on the agriculture mission and approaching mission delivery appropriately and consistently.
- The Task Force should:
- Have a clearly articulated planning function as part of its charter
- Be empowered by management in each Agency to represent the views of each Agency; and
- Have stable, high-level, cross-cutting membership.

Tasks:

- Develop a joint strategic plan that provides a roadmap to a successful shared mission
- Define the core mission critical planning areas using current Task Force Action Plans and “Themes” identified by stakeholders
- Develop a planning process that align local (including Pest Risk Committees) and state/regional objectives with joint national priorities
- Provide a mechanism to report joint organizational accomplishments towards established goals and objectives
- Enhance the planning process that solicits the input and feedback from stakeholders and partners
- Establish process for addressing *ad hoc* planning needs.
- Establish internet/intranet sites for posting joint plans and accomplishments.

Accomplishments:

- Task Force Charter has been amended to include a planning function and validation of permanent task force members.
- Task Force Charter has identified the range of planning functions.
- A process has been established for addressing ad hoc planning needs.
- Internet/intranet sites for posting joint plans have been established and the plans have been posted.

INFORMATION MANAGEMENT

- CBP and APHIS need to:
 - Develop a process to identify essential and common data elements;
 - Evaluate all information systems used to compile/express outcomes; and,
 - Ensure data quality, integrity, and analysis of program information is coordinated.

Tasks:

- Conduct agency joint information and data-related summits.
- Develop short-term and long-term strategic plans that address IT issues, systems, data management and analysis and reporting processes.

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Accomplishments:

- Conducted joint agency data summits on WADS definitions, data processes, and 280 commodity-related reporting.
- CBP present on APHIS Control Board for AQAS, data system supporting CBP.

PERFORMANCE MEASURES

- There is a need to develop and implement joint and CBP program performance measures for AQI activities that correlate to user fee and appropriated functions.
- Performance measures will accurately reflect the accomplishment of the agriculture mission within CBP.

Tasks:

- Create Ag-related performance measures within CBP.
- Incorporate the performance measures into the Field Office and CBP's Annual Report. Report will include:
 - Reliable and consistently applied metrics.
 - Parameters regarding documentation on outreach-related activities.

Accomplishments:

- Implemented performance measures for passenger baggage, vehicles, pedestrians, mail, and cargo for FY 2008.
- The DATER group finalized output, outcome, and efficiency measures for each pest pathway, except cruise lines (forthcoming).

TRAINING

- The GAO, OIG, and Joint Agency Quality Assurance Program reviews have provided favorable reports on the agriculture-related training initiatives.
- CBP and APHIS need to continue to review and improve the agriculture-related training programs used by CBP.

Tasks:

- Needs analysis at several levels to identify and document any Ag-related operational knowledge gaps.
- Evaluations of existing Ag-related training modules.
- Review and recommend measures for the completion within CBP of agriculture-related training modules.
- Evaluate training needs from other action plans.

Accomplishments:

- APHIS created four additional Pest ID inspection technique-related training modules.
- Emergency Response training needs in draft format.

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REGULATORY ENFORCEMENT

- There is a need for a coordinated effort to maintain an effective and efficient process to enforce agricultural quarantine and inspection laws and regulations.
- APHIS and CBP should ensure they are adequately tracking violations and share information across ports to ensure the consistent application of import regulations.

Tasks:

- Harmonize forms for processing civil penalties and violations.
- Insure enforcement processes are coordinated.
- Convene the Civil Penalties Action Team, with CBP representatives to:
 - Initiate activity(s) with the IT community to:
 - Develop a plan for integration of systems for data collection and information sharing.
 - Develop alternative means of sharing data and information.

Accomplishments

- Reconvened Civil Penalties Action Team which reviewed processes and analyzed data.
- Data collection systems have been evaluated and preliminary programmatic needs assessment sent to IT group.
- Quality assurance elements now included in the JAQAP.
- APHIS penalties now linked with CBP's Fine/Penalty/Forfeiture (FPF) Division.

Joint Stakeholder Conference Breakout Sessions Description

Joint Agency Planning

Goals: To identify the common joint planning themes between groups to develop a road map and strategy for future improvement. Establish and agree upon a venue to communicate planning initiatives at the local level on a regular basis.

Communication with Industry

Goals: To identify the most acceptable process for communicating with Industry in providing timely information on regulations, policies, agricultural or trade related updates, plant pest-related information, enforcement actions, etc. Identify methods/tools that CBP/PPQ can use to provide the right kind of information in a timely manner to the appropriate audience; and identify methods to increase the likelihood of CBP/PPQ being invited to provide an overview, information, updates, etc, to specific industry stakeholders.

Communication with States

Goals: To identify the most acceptable process for communicating with States in providing timely information on regulations, policies, agricultural or trade related updates, plant pest-related information, enforcement actions, etc. Identify methods/tools that CBP/PPQ can use to provide the right kind of information in a timely manner to the appropriate audience; and identify methods to increase the likelihood of CBP being invited to provide an overview, information, updates, etc, to specific state-related stakeholders.

Pest Risk Committees

Goals: To identify the composition, roles and responsibilities of members and goals of the local pest risk committee. Identify what is working, and determine if the current methods and manners in which the port pest risk committees are operating meet minimum standards to perform the job and expectations.

Quality Assurance

Goals: To identify what types of indicators, metrics, work counts (enforcement actions, actionable plant pests, inspections as they relate to enforcement actions, etc), should be used and are most “telling” of a particular port of entry, pathway, and Field Office in conducting the agriculture mission. Identify parameters, impediments, and other factors that influence measurements, WADS data, and other work counts to be used as explanatory notes when disclosing any metrics or evaluation criteria (reduced staffing, change in country pest or disease status, change in APHIS regulation, etc) which could be used to indicate how Director of Field Operations (DFOs) are measured for the agriculture mission delivery.

Joint Stakeholder Conference **Joint Agency Planning April, 30th 2008**

Introduction

The objective of this session was to identify the common joint planning themes between groups to develop a road map and strategy for future improvement, including regular planning initiatives at the local level. Approximately 17 participants attended, including CBP, APHIS, NASDA, Seed Association and Texas Animal Health.

What does joint planning look like to you at the various levels?

- CBP needs to be more engaged at a regional/state level to start driving operations jointly. Combine resources for day to day operations, but not at price of safeguarding.
- Need to take the national picture and apply it to local operations.
- There is a need for long term formal planning.
- The buy in within the field is lacking in some areas
- Formalize process for recommendations coming from the field for possible national implementation
- For planning process, get feedback from ports to identify their needs, including facilities, and adequate staffing
- What needs to be done to get national level issues pushed into regions, and vice versa?
- Quarterly roundtable and round-up meeting in CA and TX have worked well at the DFO/SPHD/SPRO level planning.
- Accomplishments towards the plans should be reported to stakeholders and partners
- Need a formalized process to have the long term vision, and the Pest Risk Committees (PRC) are a good avenue.
- One way to tie stakeholders together is by ideas being started in PRC and filter through the organizations to see how the ideas can work. Challenge our systems to work. Pest Risk Committees do work well.
- Field Office has quarterly meetings in addition to the Pest Risk Committee meetings to go over what was discussed in the meetings to try to plan out.
- Refocus Pest Risk Committees. Set up long term, mid-range and short term goals
- Make Pest Risk Committees more uniform, including meeting frequency
- Operational planning at all levels needs to be aligned with national strategic plan
- Need to see more balanced participation and joint development of operations from the other PRC members (SITC, etc)
- Provide guidance on who should be participants in the PRC; not all groups have to look alike because they may differ by port
- Pest Risk Committee was defined for benefit of everyone (formal group of people with agriculture interest to meet)
- Pest Risk Committees need National direction to help the committees go to the next level
- Pest Risk Committees could be challenged to demonstrate that activities are consistent with national level strategies
- There is a lot of Pest Risk Committee work going on through the nation, but it is not consistently organized the same way. Not given enough formalized instructions from the beginning. So individual PRC are trying to figure out who should be invited to these meetings. Thus, certain people are being left out

Joint Stakeholder Conference Joint Agency Planning April, 30th 2008

- Have a calendar of when Pest Risk Committee are meeting
- Visit each other's Pest Risk Committee meetings
- Tie Pest Risk Committees to a national strategy
- Border Patrol should be included at this conference and other planning activities.
- Stakeholders need to be involved in planning. They can help develop strategies and identify challenges and issues
- Bringing people from trade into discussions for planning is essential
- Pest identifiers should also be part of planning groups
- State should be partners, not stakeholders. The industry should be considered stakeholders, including importers, exporters, growers, etc.
- Monthly meetings with key people (industry, CBP, states, USDA, Border Patrol, etc.)
- Local and national communication has to be more uniform and with more consideration of what is being done at the local level
- Strategic plan- develop 1 year and 5 year road map
- Transparency is important
- On the internet, post key issues, who is involved to help drive the issues
- Outreach from USDA and CBP to the public should be initiated (there is not enough from either groups)
- Stakeholders should also do outreach to the public
- State and livestock have had a good partnership with USDA; continue to build these partnerships with CBP,
- As a practical matter, concerned about day-to-day services (ex. How get two extra hours of inspection time at the bridge, how to stop things from being kicked back)
- Want practical concerns addressed in a fairly smooth efficient fashion (to keep products moving)
- Part of joint planning has to do with calendars as well
- How do we input information into the system? How do we get information to CBP and APHIS? How do we facilitate that to improve the flow?
- Universal communications platform with access to all interested parties
- Monthly reports, best practices, meeting notes (sanitized from law enforcement info)
- Industry want decisions made as low of a level as possible to expedite the process
- People have to see improvements in order to continue participating
- Demonstrated improvement will motivate (measurable and with deadlines)
- Need to have coordination between CBP and PPQ for planning and training to properly allocate funds
- Some meetings can have stakeholder, while other meetings won't
- High level meetings once a month is difficult for stakeholders (counter productive)
- Should be quarterly
- Transparency issue
- Consistent dialogue (maintain dialogue)/ seamless
- Issues differ by state/ports
- Who in CBP is a responsible party to provide answers (to industry, states etc)

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- CBP representation at regional USDA office as a contact (HQ should not be the only place with co-location)
- USDA embedded with CBP to hear issues and by-pass bureaucracy
- Agriculture Liaison positions at DFO's office are overwhelmed
- Need flexibility, but also needs consistency in other areas (ex. If a port says no to something, then that same shipment should not be able come in at another port).
- Formalize annual planning process for CBP Agriculture Specialist training. Should include the respective training staff and appropriate CBP Human Resources staff
- IES needs: Getting communications about agricultural smuggling. If don't get information in a timely fashion, cannot address issues and mitigate pest risk. Also need follow ups on disposition on smuggling cases
- Need to advertise/communicate when make significant stops (ex. of smuggled shipments, etc.) that affect industry. Industry wants to feel and see that CBP/APHIS are actually working
- Communicate readily and quickly: specific issues relative to each industry (ex. there is an existing Beef Issues Group)
- Keep this in mind when dealing with certain emergencies that might arise
- Need Regional ombudsman

Who should participate in planning at the various levels?

- Identify who players are at a all level (who needs to be in the room when planning occurs)
- From that strategy, on a local level, we will reach out to who those players are
- Look at disciplines and functions from top to bottom
 - **National Level**
 - CBP APTL (Agriculture Programs and Trade Liaison)
 - CBP Office of Training and Development (OTD)
 - CBP Academy
 - Border Patrol
 - USDA PDC (Professional Development Center)
 - SITC (Smuggling Interdiction and Trade Compliance)
 - PPQ (Plant Protection and Quarantine)
 - VS (Veterinary Services)
 - IES (Investigative and Enforcement Services)
 - National Plant Board
 - National Assembly of Health Officials
 - US Animal Health Association
 - National Association of State Departments of Agriculture (NASDA)
 - Agriculture Industry Stakeholders
 - **Regional/District/State Level**
 - State Animal and Plant Health Officials and Stakeholders
 - Fish and Wildlife Service
 - SITC
 - FDA (Food and Drug Administration)
 - Other relative state agencies

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- Agriculture advisors
- IES
- SPHD (State Plant Health Director)
- VS (Veterinary Services)
- VRS (Veterinary Regulatory Services)
- CBP: DFO, Border Patrol (Sector Chiefs)
- CBP, DFO Operations Specialists
- PPQ Regional AQI Program Managers
- **Local Level**
 - Local representatives of the above mentioned agencies (front line actors)

What are common themes that joint planning should address?

- Emergency Response
- Training
- Identifying pathways with associated level of risk and prioritizing those risks
- Communication
- Threat assessment and identify emerging threats
- Identification of gaps (identify things that are not working well, including the holes/breakdowns in the system)
- Put as much planning in correcting short falls as we put into planning success stories
- Agency resources and technologies, while linking trend/threat analysis
- Critical infrastructure (ex. miles of roads that lead to US from out of country)
- Ensuring that clean shipments are sent from foreign countries (off shore)
- Leveraging resources

What communications need to take place to support the planning initiatives?

- Have similar messages coming out from both agencies (consistent message)
- Calendar (to keep communication consistent and timely)
- Pest Risk Committees is a working venue, but need more key participants
- Improve on these Pest Risk Committees
- Who will be the champion of each theme? Who will be responsible for ensuring that the areas of planning (themes) flow from the bottom up and from the top down?
- Website communication platform
- Sanitized SAIR (Significant Agricultural Interception Report), SASR (Significant Agricultural Seizure Report)
- National and local link

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Communication with Industry April 30, 2008

Introduction

The goal of this working session was identify the most acceptable process for communicating with industry in providing timely information on regulations, policies, agricultural or trade related updates, plant pest-related information, enforcement actions, etc. The group discussed ideas for methods and tools that CBP and PPQ can use to provide the right kind of information in a timely manner to the appropriate audience; and identify methods to increase the likelihood of CBP/PPQ being invited to provide an overview, information, updates, etc, to specific industry stakeholders.

Questions discussed in this session included

- What information is important to you as Industry Stakeholders?
- What types/kinds of information do you want PPQ and/or CBP to provide to you and at what frequency (vetted and non-derogatory plant pest alerts, enforcement actions, etc)?
- What are some examples of current processes of industry stakeholder communication and outreach: email, stakeholder registry, trade bulletins, magazines and press, Customs Advisory Committee (COAC)?
- What is the most acceptable process to communicate with you in providing timely information?
- Is there value of having a CBP/APHIS representative participate in regularly scheduled meetings to provide information acceptable?
- How do we meet this objective?

Information Needed

How well is CBP integrating the Agriculture mission?

- What is being done to strengthen the infrastructure, training, recruitment, etc.?
- To what extent is the CBPAS maturing/expanding their knowledge to do their job?
- Full accounting from both agencies for expenditure of funds: Why is there a deficit? Where is the money going?
- To what extent do the Ag Specialists feel valued and recognized?
- How will the work of the Joint Agency Task Force (JATF) continue with a new administration?
- What is the status of investments in infrastructure, additional employees, and training?

Information that can impact the way we do business

A. Producers/Exporters

- Pest Interceptions (would like all raw data – not just quarantined pests)
 - Important because there is a need for transparency in trade negotiations
 - Impact on operations
 - Data for trucks and manifests of shipments (% of loads with infestation)

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- Pest Alerts (deemed accurate/useful)
- Offshore Quality Control Practices
 - New policies
 - Who do we contact about what in CBP?
 - Who has authority to inspect a load at any point?
 - State regulations: www.NationalPlantBoard.org

B. Importers

- New policies/changes to inspection protocols (timeliness is key) so we know when to expect shipments, if there will be delays, if new mitigation measures have been put in place, possible civil penalties, etc.
- Feedback on compliance issues: “How well are we doing?”
- Trend reports – show the consequences
- Pest Alerts
 - Who do we contact about what in CBP?

Ways to keep industry informed

- Provide access to raw data on pest interceptions for registered users via a website (need on go-to place with links to others)
 - Data between agencies needs to be compatible
- Provide feedback on compliance issues
 - Continue informal process of feedback
 - Provide information via a stakeholder registry
- Attend to the issue of sharing information without creating trade barriers.
- Identify a point of contact within each CBP Field Office to communicate with industry

How industry would like to be informed re: status of AG mission integration:

- APHIS and CBP provide dates on a website
- Establish an industry blog
- Quality Assurance group establish some benchmark measures and report on them
- Conduct another GAO review
- Conduct an external review
- Provide feedback to DFOs and APHIS on benchmark measures as well

Overall ways to get information

- Database
 - Sort information by:
 - Country of origin
 - Commodity
 - Pest species

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- Need to identify what can be shared without creating trade barriers
- Can be made available through registered users
- Partnership Council
- “White Book” online
 - Used to be published on an annual basis; if it was online it could be updated more frequently
- Monthly Broker Meetings (varies from Port to Port) – (need to standardize?)
- Stakeholder Meetings
- Website
- Advisory committees (COAC – Customs Advisory Committee)
 - Subcommittees on Ag issues
- Bundle Port/Regional notices issues by CBP on website
- Need one go-to place for pest interception-related information
- Identify a point of contact at the CBP Field Office level for the industry to contact
- Information regarding status of CBP-Agriculture mission:
 - Another GAO review
 - QA group to ID benchmarks
 - APHIS/CBP provide this information on an industry blog website
 - DFO metrics re: how do you measure progress? Reporting-progress out.

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Communication with States April 30, 2008

Introduction

Task Force representatives emphasized that communication was an important part of moving the reorganization transition forward. They recognized a need to provide stakeholder access to CBP through forums such as this conference. The agencies want to know what information you need and how you want to receive that information.

What information is important to you as State stakeholders?

- State stakeholders indicated a desire to have information related to single or recurring interceptions of pests. Some expressed a desire for real-time or near real-time information and others were interested in periodic aggregated information, perhaps monthly. Some filters or analysis were recommended to prevent information overload.
- States want information to know how to be part of solving problems that are identified. The information could be used for trace forwards or survey activities, etc.
- Prior knowledge related to foreign nursery stock/plant material, in particular, may prevent many destructive pests from entering.
- State stakeholders also recommended that CBP conduct targeted tours and outreach at ports for state/local/county legislators and other elected officials so that they can understand the risks/issues.

What types/kinds of information do you want PPQ and/or CBP to provide to you and at what frequency?

- States expressed a desire for information about programs that Federal/States agencies have that is focused on prevention of the movement of pests in domestic and foreign commerce.
- State stakeholders asked for more information about the results of investigations and wanted the information in a timelier manner. They asked for information related to Federal laws and more clarity around what pests are actionable.
- They noted that States sometimes conduct their own investigations once a pest/disease is found, which can be a duplication of effort. Cooperation and information sharing can save money and improve process. They also suggested including State emergency management personnel in information sharing.
- State stakeholders supported stronger efforts at succession planning, transparency in use of resources and application of additional resources to the agriculture mission, and streamlining the systems for exclusion.
- Other suggestions for actions/information included establishment and communication of performance measures and evaluation of collaborative efforts, using States to help with recruitment, conducting joint training with PPQ and States, publication of a joint annual report, and sharing the results of blitzes/special operations so states can put out traps. In fact, States suggested involving them in the planning of such operations.
- States recognized that each has different laws about the handling of information provided by others that may preclude the sharing of some

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- There was some confusion about why different Federal agencies can share different types of information and the group recommended that the agencies define who owns what information, and then ask their respective attorneys how we can share appropriate information.

What is the most acceptable process to communicate with you in providing timely information?

- Stakeholders indicated that a wide variety of methods will work, including phone, e-mail, and Blackberry. They suggested identifying and using multiple points of contact and more than one means of communicating. Concurrent communication, where possible, is important to State stakeholders as is pushing information down to the lowest level.
- There was discussion about the value of pest risk committees in Hawaii
- There was a concern about possible lag time between issuance of alerts from headquarters and receipt of alerts by the Agriculture Specialists in the ports.
- There was a question about what criteria PPQ uses to issue a formal letter to State Plant Regulatory Officials, known as SPRO letters.

What are some examples of current processes of state stakeholders communication and outreach?

- Washington, Illinois, Florida, Hawaii, Maryland, Kansas, Texas, Tennessee, Virginia, and Louisiana shared similar perspectives and experiences. For example, they all:
 - Talk frequently in person or by phone
 - E-mail routinely throughout the workday
 - Have identified back-ups when they are not available
 - Maintain flexibility
 - Conduct routine calls/meetings with stakeholders, work units, and Federal partners.
 - Pest risk committees (monthly or bi-monthly)
- In addition, USDA and/or CBP:
 - Conduct roundtables with State, USDA, and CBP once or twice a year
 - Invite industry on port tours
- Veterinary staff participate in port pest risk committees and meet frequently with State Plant Health Directors, State Plant Regulatory Officials, Area Veterinarians in Charge, Food Safety and Inspection Service officials, CBP officials, and State veterinarians
- Some CBP Field Offices provide quarterly report to States in their area, conduct media outreach and publicize interceptions, successes, new areas of strategic or tactical focus, and highlights of the partnership with APHIS
- The National Plant Board and Plant Protection and Quarantine are working jointly to enhance communication between their organizations at the field and national levels.
- Invasive species councils were identified as another avenue for constructive engagement.

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- A representative from the National Association of State Departments of Agriculture (NASDA) noted that NASDA has an established policy supporting a return of the inspection function to USDA from CBP. However, the representative noted a commitment to move forward and a renewed focus on achieving the agriculture mission. Specific benchmarks for continued success included filling existing vacancies, particularly in high-vacancy locations like San Francisco, strengthening the canine program, establishing a stronger recruitment program, establishing an agriculture position in charge of the entire AQI system reporting directly to CBP Commissioner Basham, providing timely relevant information from databases to States, establish a transparent financial tracking system and share audits on how user fees are used, and providing quarterly financial reports to Partnership Council, hold periodic stakeholder meetings
- State stakeholders suggested ensuring the two Secretaries are engaged in coordinating key issues between the agencies.

Is the value in having a CBP/PPQ representative participate in regular local meeting to provide information?

- Yes

Joint Stakeholder Conference Pest Risk Committee April 30, 2008

Introduction

This session was intended to identify the composition, roles and responsibilities of members and goals of the local pest risk committee. Identify what is working, and determine if the current methods and manners in which the port pest risk committees are operating meet minimum standards to perform the job and expectations.

Tom Chanelli opened the discussion by stating that the primary purpose of the Pest Risk Committee (PRC) is to conduct an informal risk analysis of all plant and animal pest/disease pathways. Risk analysis is comprised of three parts: risk assessment, risk management and risk communication.

When a pest risk committee conducts a risk assessment, it is assessing the probability of a pest/disease introduction, likelihood of establishment, as well as the consequence of a particular introduction. During the risk management discussions, the pest risk committee develops and recommends risk management options to management, evaluates and monitors operations via established performance measures and identifies ways to improve. During the risk communication discussions, the pest risk committee develops and selects options to communicate risk information internally and externally (stakeholders and the public) to increase risk awareness and to gain compliance.

The Agricultural Quarantine Inspection Monitoring (AQIM) program is a system whereby random samples are taken within each major pathway (e.g., air passengers, cargo, mail, border passengers, trucks, railcars etc.) in order to determine the risk of each pathway. With this information, PPQ and CBP can determine how effective port of entry operations are and take steps to set goals and measure performance after making operational improvements. Thus, the AQIM program is used to measure performance and to enhance risk targeting effectiveness. The AQIM program was instituted to meet the mandate of the Government Performance and Results Act (GPRA) of 1993.

Nancy Becker stated that PPQ instituted Pest Risk Committees prior to the formation of the Department of Homeland Security (DHS). Since the formation of DHS; PPQ and CBP have worked together to continue local Pest Risk Committees nationwide. Pest Risk Committees are comprised of subject matter experts from CBP, PPQ, State Departments of Agriculture, and sometimes other Federal agencies, and universities, and industry. During risk committee meetings, pest pathway management is discussed, operational improvements are discussed and implemented, and special operations are identified to target areas of high risk as well as to further assess risk. Pest Risk Committees communicate risk information via the chain of command to other Pest Risk Committees.

Composition of a Pest Risk Committee

The typical Pest Risk Committee is comprised of personnel from CBP (Director of Field Operations, Port Director, Port Information Officer, Field Analysis Staff, Fines Penalties and Forfeiture Staff), PPQ (State Plant Health Director, Port Officer in Charge, Identifiers, AQI-Veterinary Medical Officer, Pest Survey Specialist, Smuggling Interdiction and Trade

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Compliance staff, and Risk Analysts), APHIS-Veterinary Services, APHIS-Investigative and Enforcement Services, State Department of Agriculture (State Plant Regulatory Official).

In addition to typical risk committee members; membership may also include academia (local universities), Border Patrol, Immigration Customs Enforcement (ICE), Food Safety Compliance Service (FSIS), Fish and Wildlife Service (FWS), Centers for Disease Control (CDC), Environmental Conservation Services, and the National Park Service.

Who Chairs the Pest Risk Committee and is there a Charter?

A comprehensive discussion took place regarding the charter and chairmanship of the committee. In terms of chairmanship, some ports rotated the chair between CBP and PPQ; others had co-chairs between PPQ and CBP. There were also other variations such as CBP personnel being the chair at all times. In ports where the chair rotated, the frequency of rotation varied from monthly to yearly. The breakout group felt there should be more standardization.

There was also considerable variation regarding the charter of Pest Risk Committees. Some committees had a charter and some did not. Some committees with a charter had followed a common template, while other did not. The breakout group felt that all committees should have a charter based on a common template. However, the basic charter should allow for some flexibility to meet local port needs.

How often do Pest Risk Committees meet?

There is quite a bit of variability in the frequency of pest risk committee meetings. Some ports meet quarterly, some monthly, some semi-annually or annually and some as needed. The variability in meeting frequency is dependent on the size of the ports and if the meetings involve a number of ports that find it logistically difficult to meet very often due to the distance that members must drive to the meeting as well as coordinating schedules.

It was felt that committees would meet more often as they figured out ways to be more effective and outcome orientated.

What happens to the minutes?

A discussion took place regarding the minutes of the Pest Risk Committee. Minutes are sent to Bruce Lewke at CBP Headquarters in Washington, DC. It was recommended that the minutes be posted on CBP's and PPQ's intranet websites for internal use and a sanitized version on the internet for public viewing. Some felt there is a need to standardize the minutes by using a common template and that the minutes should include success stories. Question arose regarding how the minutes are reviewed and shared.

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Where does the port risk information go; what entity utilizes this information; how is it jointly utilized?

There is a joint CBP-PPQ workgroup (DATER Workgroup) that reviews data to ensure that it's accurate and also analyzes the data. The group provides feedback to DFOs via CBP headquarter agriculture staff.

Success Stories

It was felt that pest risk committees are very beneficial because they bring stakeholders together and serve to create essential communication networks. This has enabled people to get to know each other and to have a forum to discuss common issues.

AQIM data is used by committees to evaluate port performance and to enhance targeting and port risk management.

The Laredo Work Unit and Miami Risk Committees recommended and implemented a number of very effective special operations.

What can we do for improvement?

PPQ should hire an appropriate number of trained risk analysts to support local pest risk committees. The myriad of risk data sources as well as the complexity of interpreting what the data means and developing options demands a highly trained risk analyst.

How will the trained risk analyst communicate to the local Committee?

The risk analyst will have a goal of attending each risk committee in person or participate via conference call. Prior to each meeting the risk analyst will provide a status report of how effective each port is managing each pest pathway using the national performance measures and other measures. The analyst will provide options in writing to local management as to how the risk management could be improved.

In between risk committee meetings the analyst will be monitoring risk information and alerting port management to trends and new risks that they need to be aware of. Local management will/should be contacting the risk analyst between meetings with questions and tasks to be considered in coordination with the supervisor of the analyst.

What is the pest risk committee producing?

As a result of pest risk committee meetings and discussions, special operations are agreed upon to gather risk information concerning pathways and/or to develop plans to better mitigate pest risk within pathways. During pest risk committees, discussions take place as to how the port is performing (as indicated by performance measures) in each pathway and plans are developed to improve performance. Discussions take place regarding new commodities arriving at the port and what pests they should be looking for. Such discussion may include research as to what other ports have been receiving the commodity and what they have been finding.

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Pest risk committees have enabled ports to identify and close pest and smuggling pathways.

Pest risk committees serve to create a forum for all stakeholders to develop critical communication networks.

Pest Risk Committee Success Stories

Pest risk committees have served as a forum for training in how to use available risk databases such as the AQAS and AQIM databases.

Some committees always have as part of the agenda a discussion of how well the port is performing in each pathway according to the national performance measures. This involves examining the port's AQIM data in conjunction with workload data or actual work accomplishments of the port. Such a discussion is a great starting point for discussing goals and plans to enhance risk management. The Laredo Texas Work Unit routinely has such discussions.

Many ports have excellent outreach programs that help to improve compliance among industry and the public.

What is the definition of success for agriculture? How do we measure success?

Success can be defined by how the port is managing each pest risk pathway via agreed upon CBP/PPQ joint national performance measures. Port Risk Committees set goals and measure whether they have achieved their goals of improving pest risk management. Goals will/may vary from port to port do to fundamental differences in the nature of risk pathways. Success can be measured by:

- How effectively the port uses risk information to improve performance
- How quickly the port recognizes and reacts to new threats
- The quality of pest interceptions (e.g., discovering significant pests for the first time in commodities)
- The effectiveness of special operations and risk-based operational changes.
- Determining whether a certain risk has been mitigated or eliminated.

Conclusion

In conclusion, the group felt that steps should be taken to standardize how pest risk committees operate in terms of their charter, agenda and membership while still allowing for flexibility. Pest risk analysis training should be provided to committees. Also, the group supported the idea of PPQ hiring risk analysts that would support pest risk committees. These risk analysts would work closely with CBP analysts.

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Introduction

Session participants met to identify what types of indicators, metrics, work counts (enforcement actions, actionable plant pests, inspections as they relate to enforcement actions, etc), should be used and are most “telling” of a particular port of entry, pathway, and Field Office in conducting the agriculture mission. Identify parameters, impediments, and other factors that influence measurements, WADS data, and other work counts to be used as explanatory notes when disclosing any metrics or evaluation criteria (reduced staffing, change in country pest or disease status, change in APHIS regulation, etc) which could be used to indicate how DFOs are measured for the agriculture mission delivery.

Background

- Quality assurance (QA) was one of the original measures that PPQ and CBP approached collectively.
- The Quality Assurance process evolved over time.
- Produced collaborative reports identifying key issues and indicating how to address issues collectively with CBP. Team chemistry was an original issue; early reviews were not mission driven.
- Process has improved, is mission driven, and there is good team chemistry. The teams are identifying real issues.
- Information collection definitions were vague, presented problems with validity of data. System is being tweaked and in the process of being addressed.
- Disparity with cross training of Customs and Border Protection Officers (CBPOs) at ports throughout the United States. At ports where cross training has occurred the interception rates increased.

Metric influencing factors, dynamics etc that may affect quality assurance:

- How efficient are our inspections? How do you factor or measure inspector variability, quality, efficiency etc. Such as actual inspection time versus other duties or inspector ability versus the amount of product to be inspected
- Hard to measure.
- Establish a standard of service so industry will know how long an inspection process will take.
- Port shopping by industry influences metrics. Industry will bring their shipment through the port that moves the product fastest and with the least enforcement.
- What about charting seasons for varying agriculture products and sharing that information with all CBPAS. Producing manuals/documents alerting CBPAS as to peak interception periods for a given product. This could aid in targeting efforts at the port level.
- Plant an item within a shipment and test inspector’s ability/skill.
- Don’t rely on border inspections to intercept all pests; especially with the rate commerce is increasing. Offshore efforts should be increased and may influence metrics.
- If industry really wants speed then the safeguarding process needs to be pushed offshore. Products going through a preclearance program move faster and are cleaner.

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- Import volumes are becoming astronomical. Technology needed to aid in the process.
Number of interceptions at a port
 - Is this a good measure of success? – Most think not.
 - Difficulty in this process.
- CBP system does not mesh well with PPQ systems. Viewed as a problem.
- Need a database/system or process to filter what we have captured to identify key targeting parameters that will be useful for CBPAS.
- Incorporate approach rate/seizures into metric.
- Need an in-depth analysis of data we already have. Current data system is rife with errors. We can't rely on the data that is currently available. Data integrity is a big issue.
 - PPQ and CBP need the same starting point and a way to communicate about suspect data (e.g., cut flowers, stems or bouquets)
 - Data input/entry a potential issue.
 - Data validation process needed.
 - A baseline does not exist and needs to be identified and/or established.

What Does Success Look Like in Quality Assurance for Stakeholders?

- Use technicians for paperwork and free up highly trained and skilled CBPAS for the critical inspectional process.
- Paperwork provided prior to showing up for the inspection process (cut flowers) would allow inspectors to focus on the inspectional process.
- No pests or diseases introductions; all intercepted.
- Tie in to NAPIS data system.
- Number of infestations used to be used as a tool measuring how well the inspectional process is working. Could identify State/PPQ trapping or interception results and use to measure interception success at the border.
- What is a database is showing, captured insects, inspections, enforcement actions etc., and how does it relates to what is showing up within a given State?
- The fact that a pest is showing up in traps identifies a pest is getting through somewhere and in some way. There could be a new pathway that needs to be identified or a hole in the system somewhere.
- Consider the biological lag time from the time of actual infestation to the point where it is identified as being within the United States.
- State to share trapping, survey results, contacting CBP and aid in identifying the pathway pest may be entering upon.

What does success look like in QA for CBP and PPQ?

- Customer satisfaction.
- Fewer complaints.
- Real partnerships that can address conflict resolution promptly without sacrificing inspectional quality.
- Adequate staffing. Qualified relative to the existing work load.
- Technology.

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- Targeting ability
- Offshore/preclearance
- Examine current CBP systems for Ag purposes.
- Identify how much work load an inspector can handle with efficiency and quality

How do we measure, meaningfully, the success or failure of the CBPAS in delivering the agriculture mission? What are the meaningful measurements?

- Emergency Action Notifications (EANs)
 - Produce local or national criteria for targeting purposes from the information contained within the EAN database.
- Violations/591s
- Quarantine Material Intercepted (QMIs)
- Qualitative vs. quantitative data
- Work Accomplishment Data System (WADS)
- Seizure/pest/EAN/interceptions – the higher the better. Use to measure performance.
- Examine Pest Identification reports (309s) and monitor how many interceptions are being sent to the USDA.
 - As a measurement of efficiency.
 - Use as a targeting tool.
 - Issue on ID turnaround time.
 - Faster ID turnaround will aid in motivating CBPAS.
 - USDA hires “triage” identifiers at the port level.
 - 309s may also be used to evaluate or measure offshore pressure from a specific area.
- Use IO25 and/or CERTS and/or AQIM – for developing passenger and/or cargo targeting criteria. Must ensure that all ports are using and entering critical information in to the system to ensure usefulness
- Key is to identify the commodity that is being intercepted and target accordingly.
- Utilize existing CBP systems – NTAG, TAP-2000, Data Query, and work groups such as DATER etc.

What can we do more, better?

- Identify who’s responsible for identifying and developing new tools for CBPAS.
- Increase the focus on identifying, developing and implementing new tools
- CBP and USDA should work collaboratively on the development or identification of new tools.
- The United States is far ahead of other countries as far as technology issues coming to bear on the inspection process.
- Hard to beat the ability of a trained agriculture dog. High-tech sniffers are not the answer.
- Targeting is essential—a system that identifies the high-risk passenger and where they’re coming from.
 - Develop Targeting on the floor.
 - Rovers key in this respect.
 - Develop targeting questions to aid in identifying the high risk passenger.

Joint Stakeholder Conference
Super Ports: Los Angeles, Miami, New York, San Francisco
May 1, 2008

From what you heard during Wednesday's Breakout Session, what are your overall reactions?

- Discussions on successes were good, however, a better discussion might have been where we failed and how we can improve; the Quality Assurance notes did a good job on this.
- Performance measures should measure the impact of additional staff.
- Main theme was that everyone wants information. Unclear how to distribute or analyze the information as gathered by CBP and USDA.
- Post Interdiction Committees (PIC) are working, but may need more involvement by stakeholders.
- Sharing pest identification data/risk information in a timely manner to states and industry was one of the biggest issues that came out of the overall conference.
- Many SPRO's want USDA/CBP to share where the pest is intercepted and where it is going to allow surveillance to be conducted in those areas.
- States and industry may not be as connected as they need to be with USDA and CBP. It is difficult for them to get direct information from them.
- SPHD/SPRO communication is better because they are co-located; there is not the issue of long-distance professional relationships such as with DHS and USDA.
- Current process for obtaining information from CBP is too long (i.e., formal written request from state goes to ORR for a decision – takes too long).
- CBP is currently working with TX, CA, HI and OR to get MOUs for what information is needed and what information can be released. Timeliness of information is the crucial issue. MOU will reduce wait time for states.
- CAPS program should be linked to CBP to provide information. CAPS identifies pests and the commodities in which they were located.
- Information flow should go both ways to and FROM states/industry.
- Can CBP respond quickly to an ever/fast changing agricultural world (real-time)?
- Coordination with SITC may be used once a container has cleared the border.
- What is being intercepted? How should states eradicate it? Is it actionable? How do we design a surveillance plan?
- USDA can do a better job assisting CBP in where to focus their efforts.
- PPQ Port pest risk committee analyst position at each port may be a good solution.
- CBP already has Field Analysis Specialists at the ports. They use information in conjunction with PPQ and Legacy Customs systems to target commodities and routes.
- PPQ's Center for Plant Health Science and Technology (CPHST) gives risk assessment training to Miami CBP.
- CBP should be invited to Cooperative Agriculture Pest Survey (CAPS) meetings.
- CPHST is creating an Ag. Quarantine Inspection (AQI) laboratory.
- Can anti-terrorism programs such as Container Security Initiative (CSI) and Secure Freight Initiative (SFI) also cover invasive species? Push out the border.
- CBP has sent out teams to combat specific problems such as hitchhikers in Italian tile.

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What are the common themes from Joint Planning and what strategies would you use to implement at a local level?

- Information sharing – Diagram where the information needs to go (e.g., states, industry, SPHD, SPRO) and determine how the information will get to each.
- What non-proprietary information does CBP have that it can release immediately?
- Joint national data group between CBP and PPQ exists already.
 - Data quality is an issue, as reports may not match field office data.
 - Reconciling differences
 - Analysis
- Bring in risk committees and CPHST to make a better risk analysis process.
- What is risk assessment? What is the risk management process? What is the risk analysis process? Risk communication? What is the risk committee agenda? What is the status of our pathways? How are the performance measures going?
- Improving the identification/interception skills of CBPO/CBPAS. PPQ has given some training to CBPO/CBPAS at the border.
- Grant more Cargo Release Authority (CRA's) for non actionable pests
- Need to mitigate the threat, but still clear the large amount of cargo and/or passengers in a timely manner.
- What commodity needs to have an intensive exam, and what doesn't?
- Compliance agreements need to be up-to-date. QA teams will come back to super ports more frequently.
- A communication mechanism is needed from the Pest Risk Committee to the DFOs and maybe nationally and at HQ. Streamline the process so we can respond in a timely manner and share the information with stakeholders.
- Resolve inconsistencies between ports regarding what is inspected. Share between ports what is being inspected and why. What are other ports doing?
- Communication is the key to all other ideas. A solid, rigorous, sustainable, substantive communication effort is necessary.
- Industry wants to hear there is action as a result of this conference. QA and outcome measurements are needed to accomplish this.

What are the top 5 items you can immediately address and how do you plan to implement those actions?

- Staffing and recruiting – develop the agriculture career path: looking at good recruiting areas such as schools, Assistant Port Director for agriculture, Agriculture CSI: use partnerships CBP already has; jump teams: a stop-gap until a formal program can be accomplished; training – what is risk analysis, etc.
- Maximize the use of the cargo release authority to get cargo moving: use of ID kits, PPQ identifiers, increase CRA's for CBPAS, periodic pests on CRA list with input from ports.
- Effective pest risk analysis/management plan

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- Effective pest risk committee: establish minimum standards for risk committees, training, more structure – some commonality between them, SOPs, communicate between super ports, sub-committees, and participate in CAPS.
- Enhanced interaction: Learn lessons from other ports/regions.
- Tie Port Pest Risk Committee data into SITC between USDA Analysts (start with super ports) and CBP Field Analyst Specialists. Have them support CAPS. State survey coordinator should be involved.
- Get targeting information out
- Greater consistency and communication between risk committees
- Risk assessment training by CBP
- More structure and guidance for committees. Meeting frequency.
- Clarify pest exclusion and detection
- CBP be invited to the state CAPS committee
- APHIS should follow through with interception back to host country
- PRC make suggestions on where precautionary steps should be taken before an interception is made/work with host country
- Better/more technology – scans for ag work with the national plan diagnostic network, CPHST is creating an AQI Lab for better detection technology, better identification technology, better linkages between technology, link to rejected permits, more K-9s, enhanced x-ray, tech. for intl. mail/etc.
- CBP needs to decrease time between incident and penalty, reduce mitigation of penalty

Joint Stakeholder Conference
Southern Border: Laredo, El Paso, Tucson, San Diego
May 1, 2008

Introduction

The Southern Border Working Session Group included DFO and SPHD participants from Customs Border Protection and Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service (APHIS) representing California, Arizona and Texas.

Comments on Communication with Stakeholders and Industry:

- Establish and identify a CBP point of contact for stakeholders at Field Offices or POEs
- Identify stakeholders for each DFO and Port to initiate meetings and establish meetings with stakeholders and industry similar to broker's meetings
- San Diego has identified stakeholders that are important to CBP and has provided letters to inform them that CBP is willing to help them with questions or issues they might have
- Stakeholders are still referring to Ag inspectors as USDA; there is confusion at the port level. Need to clarify organizational structures and functions.
- USDA should also move forward in a better relationship with stakeholders
- Communicate and update stakeholders about success stories and activities being performed
- Identify the type of information that can be shared with the stakeholders
- Place an agriculture specialist in regions to enhance communication with stakeholders. Place a headquarters CBP employee at USDA facility. Establish liaison positions in States where agriculture is a high priority. Use liaison as the CBP point of contact for State and stakeholders
- SPHD and SPRO usually work in same state, good idea to have liaison between CBP and USDA to be a contact for stakeholders

The Southern Border representatives recognized a need to improve communications with stakeholders and industry through joint CBP and USDA efforts. The group recommended that CBP establish and identify CBP points of contact for the stakeholders and industry at the field levels and that a stakeholder list be developed for each DFO and Port. CBP and USDA could establish meetings with the stakeholders to share information, success stories and activities and to discuss concerns specific to their areas of responsibility.

The group also suggested establishing liaison positions at the field/state levels to communicate information between CBP, SPHDs and SPROs. This position would be most beneficial in those states that have major agriculture industries.

Comments on Pest Risk Committees (PRC)

- The PRC is a good vehicle to communicate and share information with stakeholders. Each port has a PRC, some have more than one (Laredo has four) and some have been consolidated by the Field Offices.
- From national level, there is a need for direction as to who should be in the PRC, when and how to meet, and how to disseminate information.

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- Develop a template for a charter that provides national consistency, identifies members, meeting requirements, defines use of AQIM and other data, but allows for local flexibility on appropriate issues.
- USDA should work on specific pest lists pertaining to stakeholders (State Partners) and provide a specific list to CBP

The Southern Border representatives identified the PRC as an excellent medium to communicate with stakeholders and industry. The group expressed the need to reinforce the institution of the PRC nationwide. The PRC charter needs to be standardized nationally by HQ to provide for a more consistent application in the field. The national charter needs to provide guidance with regard to composition of members, frequency of meetings, purpose of meetings, format and content of meeting minutes, mandated agenda items to include AQIM, pest risk assessment and special operations. The group also noted that local PRC should have some flexibility to tailor meetings for adaptation to local and regional needs. USDA should provide local PRCs with specific pest lists and associated hosts/commodities important to stakeholders in their respective areas to develop special operations and determine pest pathways.

What can be done based on the ideas heard in the conference?

Pest Risk Committees:

- Successful practices from San Diego PRC will be shared between CBP and USDA
- Laredo Field Office is already conducting shared PRC
- Arizona will expand PRCs to bring all parties together
- El Paso has shared PRCs
- Review Charter
- Create a national PRC Template to include:
 - National mandates
 - Flexibility
 - Identification of stakeholders and industries for DFO and ports
- Establish regular meetings and outreach with stakeholders through the PRCs
- Share best practices between the PRCs
- PRC members can visit each other's meeting to gather best practices and gain knowledge of current issues and or pest risk trends

Quality Assurance:

- Develop more performance measures
- Ensure consistent collection and recording of agriculture inspection data nationwide
- Provide WADS training to CBP management (Assistant Port Directors, Chiefs and Supervisors under Trade) at all ports of entry

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Communication:

- Communicate and share information with industry
- For better communications, CBP and USDA need to know what type of information is being requested from industry, how it will be used and how it can be provided without violating third-party rules
- Build confidence levels with industry by involving regional stakeholders and inviting industry to visit at ports of entry
- Perform more outreach to industry on our agriculture functions at the ports of entry
- USDA should include CBP in conferences where stakeholders are present to keep CBP informed of issues affecting stakeholders
- Continue to conduct roundtables with headquarter representation
- Headquarters should organize a Southern Border conference to exchange information on best practices, success stories, current trends and to increase dialogue across the southern border ports of entry
- CBP could send Southern Border DFO representatives to the Border Governors Taskforce

Comment Themes:

- National guidance
- Information
- Quality assurance (training)
- Best practices at local level
- PRC changes
- PRC flexibility

What are the main themes we want to inform the Task Force?

- The importance of the Pest Risk Committees
- Communication
- Sharing of information with industry, etc.
- Quality assurance of data
 - Standard data collection methods
 - Clear definitions of data to be collected

What is working?

- Overall PRCs are working
- Improved relationships with USDA
- Training is available
- PRC members from other ports visit other PRC meetings

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What will you do when you leave?

- Hold a regional PRC conference
- Hold a Southern Border PRC conference

What do you want to do?

- Identify stakeholders for the DFO and Ports
- Hold stakeholder's meeting
- Outreach for stakeholders

What is your reaction?

- Need to inform stakeholders and industry of facts of the merger
- Need more meetings
- Need to identify all stakeholders and their points of contact and send letters to stakeholders to introduce CBP points of contact. Stakeholders are uncertain of who they should contact
- Present single message to stakeholders
- Provide consistency for the PRC

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Northern Border: Boston, Buffalo, Detroit, Seattle, Pre-Clearance
May 1, 2008

From what you heard during Wednesday's Breakout Session, what are your overall reactions?

- A lot of work done in all five groups.
- The breakout sessions were very positive and constructive. Amplified the importance of ensuring broad-based communication and involvement from all areas of concern.
- Industry representatives being invited was a plus and aided in driving home the importance of the agriculture mission
- Impressed with industry's concern of and for the CBP agriculture mission.
- Industry interest in the pest interception information was a clear message in all groups.
- Awareness gained was a common theme with industry.
- Awareness that one size, solution, does not fit all.
- Non-government organizations were not part of this, why (i.e. Sierra Club, Nature Conservancy)? These groups have a lot of pull. Recommend these groups be invited to a conference much like this one. (They were invited but were unable to attend)
- State perspective was that industry groups were for the most part national in scope. Suggest being more aware of the need for communication at the local level.
- States view PPQ/CBP as "gatekeepers" and the States as "grounds keepers".

What are the common themes from Joint Planning, Communication (combined), Pest Risk Committees and Quality Assurance? What strategies would you use to implement improvements at a local level?

- The need was identified for sharing of data in a common, uniform format.
- Desire an avenue for common communications at all regulatory levels.
- How are we going to share information with stakeholders? Web portal could be created to share information such as; what's being discussed, successes.
- Different types of data industry desires include: higher level policy discussions, concerns and decisions.
- Big concern echoed throughout all breakout sessions on how CBPAS are being treated and the sense that they do not feel valued, have career ladder issues, and are not on a level playing field with CBPOs.
- Too many layers within CBP to go through to get answers. Need to define the points of contact to get answers or address specific areas of concern and informational needs.
- Industry is very concerned about the use of the AQI user fees and want to know how the funds are being spent? Need transparency. What are we getting for our money?
- Want to know what is approaching the borders. Industry may desire too much information that is for official use only)
 - Want communication from CBP/USDA on what is being intercepted at the borders, what commodities it's being intercepted on, and from where. Aid outside interests on targeting, actions, trapping, potential concerns.
 - Industry desire full catalogue of information so they can filter it themselves. This could create issues with the Trade Secrets Act, Privacy Act, or other statutes. Industry needs to narrow their information desires/needs.

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- Industry may already have access to some relevant information needs, through the trade statistics collected by the Department of Commerce.
- Industry wants numbers/data on total imports by commodity in a timely fashion.
- Data may not be categorized in a fashion they desire.
 - Need to examine and pinpoint exactly what industry desires in this respect. Their data request(s) are very broad.

Strategies:

- Clarify, specifically, with industry what they actually want and/or need.
- Utilize steering committees to address potential web share and use industry in the development thereof. Need transparency throughout, especially to the stakeholders.
- Build a web portal/plate that satisfies industry-related information needs. Example: C-TPAT currently being used successfully with industry and addressing their information and communication needs.
- Need to look at Industry as a “partner” and not an adversary.
- Create a steering committee that’s transparent to the stakeholders in order to make the web portal/ platform work.
- Identify short-, medium-, and long-term goals.
- Identify Website models that are currently working and examine for usefulness in respect to communication with industry.
- Utilize Pest Risk Committees (PRC) and create sub-committees.
 - Create/ensure uniformity to the degree possible.
 - Provide national direction.
 - Establish priorities, nationally.
 - Formalize the charter template.
 - Formalize the committee itself.

What are the best practices or mechanics for joint implementation at a local level?

- Develop short, medium ,and long-term goals
- Ensure broad-based participation in Pest Risk Committees

Short Term Goals:

- PRC’s are the best avenue to address short-term goals ensuring information is being received and given to industry entities.
- Dissemination of information from the PRC to CBPAS at all levels (cautionary note on this topic).
- Provide PRC meeting minutes to CBPAS and industry.
- Create subcommittees and include as a non-core PRC group.
- National information made available through musters/alerts/special operations concerning agriculture issues. Provide copy to SPHD and SPRO. Create a “clean” version that can be disseminated outside of CBP.
- Sharing pest interception information to state, etc.

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- Standardized protocol for information sharing.
- Use phone calls and create an information loop from USDA to SPHD and SPRO.
- Setting up a national communication protocol for sharing critical pest/operational information interagency and intra-agency.

Medium Term Goals:

- Improve timely “routine” pest interception information to CBP from PPQ
 - PPQ needs to address this backlog issue since it is critical to success of identifying pests approaching our borders in a timely manner.
 - PPQ needs to examine their diagnostic/identifier capacity.
 - PPQ could examine partnerships with universities to approach this issue.
 - PPQ should/can encourage universities to support/promote the entomology and pathology disciplines.
 - Intensify process for release authority given to CBPAS.
 - National Plant Diagnostic Network may be a source or avenue that could be utilized. In development – More of a long-term goal.
 - Explore additional avenues to alleviate the back-log in pest identifications.

Long Term Goals:

- Web site (portal)
 - Layered access.
 - Filtered
 - Consistent data entry.
 - Keep current
 - Stakeholder availability.
 - Seek input from stakeholders.
 - Input from internal sources.
 - Include tactical and strategic information.
 - Layer GIS in.
 - Maintain a Web blog – to provide/create a two-way communication avenue. May serve the purpose of providing immediate information and feedback to industry.
 - Staffing for a hotline.
 - Examine our PPQ and CBP websites and make sure they are user-friendly and provide the desired information.
 - Does CBP.gov meet industries needs? Need to validate and examine. Get feedback from industry on this.
 - Succession planning – on both State and Federal side.

What are the top items you can immediately address and how do you plan to implement those actions?

- Standardization of the Pest Risk Committees charter.
 - Assign to Joint Agency Task Force

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From what you heard during Wednesday's breakout Session, what are your overall reactions?

- Heard a number of recurring themes
- Encouraged by the dialogue

What are the common themes from Joint Planning, Communication (Combined), Pest Risk Committees and Quality Assurance? What strategies would you use to implement improvements at the local level?

- Overall theme was that timely communication was the key. There were already some established USDA communication protocols with states and industry. When we merged, those protocols were not established in the new organization so there was some confusion between the players about who to go to for information or to have needs addressed. One suggestion was to have a unique website.
- Keep communication flowing above the ports and below headquarters, but get the right people in place who understand plant/animal needs, who want to do the work, and who understand the stakeholders
- There is a need to define what information exists, who owns, and what the legal issues are it to know what information can be shared.
- Pest Risk Committees (PRC) are doing a great job at the ground level. How can the structure in the Joint Agency Task Force (JATF) better link with the PRCs, and what are the communication mechanisms between the two?
- How to recruit and retain CBP Agriculture Specialists and canine, particularly in hard to staff areas?
- CBP is a top to bottom organization, but there is the need for some sideways communication. Timeliness again is important.
- There is a bottleneck at the port (passenger and cargo). Everything cannot be addressed at the port of entry. Consider more offshore initiatives such as preclearance.
- Who is in the best position to perform pest risk assessments (what is the system/mechanism to perform risk assessments)?
- Need mechanisms in place for better pest risk pathway assessments. One way is to create a risk analyst to look at data and then take determinations to PRCs
- Leverage to ensure companies import clean commodities ("stick approach")
- How do we get the public to work for us (what is in it for the passengers/importers- "carrot approach") so the job could then be to look for the bad actors (violators)?
- What tools are needed at the ports need to deliver the product? PPQ has the Center for Plant Health Science and Technology, but it hasn't really provided the tools to the ports.
- Define roles and have better understanding/utilization of operations (DFO/SPHD/SPRO). Who is in the best position to address particular issues? Who does what and how can we use existing CBP and APHIS resources to rebuild?
- Define strategy and in-house policies; and get clarification and adjustments from APTL (communication should be tactical, and also at HQ level for collaboration/clarification)
- Build teamwork between HQ and the ports

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- The SPHD and SPRO allow for communication flow between PPQ and the State. No similar structure exists in CBP. Information flows from CBP through PPQ to the SPHD, who delivers the information to the SPRO. Is there truly a need for CBP to still communicate with SPRO?
- Remember that a port of entry is a gateway to many States, not just to the State it is in.
- Help target and build an inventory of resources

Communication Strategies

- Flat lining information flow, and getting information quickly to who needs it
- Long term, getting this communication effort to work is a money issue (will protect agriculture and save money)
- We already have information and systems (websites that can be easily modified). We need someone in place to make a quick decision to release relevant information. Processes need to be in place for information to be disseminated. At the same time, not all information will be relevant and dissemination of too much information can lead to overload.
- Need clear picture of what information is indeed needed and need to know what is allowed to be distributed
- Mentioned that the PRC is a great unit to communicate, but have not identified what the PRC should look like
- How was information shared before the merger and did it work?
- There is a lot of good/positive communication going on already at the field level
- Define who has the lead in various situations (there is a need for a uniform policies)
- If products continue in commerce, under the law, until they reach the ultimate consumer, how do we define ultimate consumer --grocery store, individual buying product at store?
- Consistent policies are needed so regulations are not left open to varying interpretations. What does consistency look like?
- Practicality of where this policy is set is equally important
- Continue/improve effort to promote success to the public (need to do better job of selling ourselves)
- What are the measures for success for working with/ reaching out to stakeholders
- What are the costs saved to industry
- Keep communication flowing above ports and below HQ level to continue movement, but get the right people in place (someone that understand plant/animal needs, who want to do the work, and understand the stakeholders)
- Challenge each PRC to address how they will account for pest risks they are challenged with
- Develop a model on the CBP side with a 3-person team within each State, consisting of SPHD, SPRO, and CBP.
- Create guidance and oversight for the PRC
- Combine CBP at the regional level with only one person (different approach to the 3-person team)

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- Build an inventory of communication resources.
- Can use SITC program to get information as well, since they have more in common with CBP
- SITC is not tied to a State, they will follow a case through
- Multi-state structure

Recruitment Strategies

- Recruit at local universities for local areas
- Have local interns
- Host joint CBP/PPQ recruiting events
- Develop a joint strategy because PPQ is also suffering from low pool of recruits
- College scholarships
- Develop a plant protection curriculum that would promote plant protection to students (North Carolina and Florida have similar programs)
- Have more promotion opportunities beyond GS-11
- Offset of college loans (100% repayment of college loans)
- Bonus programs (e.g. kicker programs \$10,000 – 15,000 similar to military models)
- Career enhancement programs (clerical staff provided with tools to earn credits to move on to qualifying for an Agriculture Specialist. That person will already have the background of the mission- they just move up the ranks)
- Housing allowances
- Tuition assistance (for dependents)
- Allow applicants to choose just one city instead of 5 cities (focused recruitment). Applicants will likely choose where they have a family base. If they are forced to choose 5 locations and get picked up in the last choice, they will spend time trying to relocate.

Technology Strategies

- Investing more resources in the canine program
- Looking into larger dogs as well (cargo dogs)
- AQIM data sharing across agencies
- Catalog what data and systems are out there, along with who those systems belong to, then determine what information each group needs and who can access information
- Catalog of what is being planned to improve the databases that we have and for everyone to be aware of what is going on. Perhaps done by an investment review board.
- Possible tasking: Identify each systems owner (ex. AQAS, ACE, ATS), and look at each field and find out what information can be disseminated without violating 3rd-party rules, Freedom of Information Act, etc.
- Encourage development of new pest identification technology to take the place of individuals and make better use of human resources)
- Who is going to put these lists together, and who will maintain them. Make that someone's full time job.
- Look into more irradiation processes for pests

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- Invite scientists of the world to present proposals or present what technologies they have created that could possibly be useful for CBP/APHIS pest/disease needs for identification, operational needs, etc.
- Provide CBP Officer's with resources and technologies to better assist/help the Agriculture Specialists

What are the best practices or mechanics for joint implementation at a local level?

- Existing Risk Assessment Committees
- Existing flow of information between SPHD and SPRO

What are the top items you can immediately address and how so you plan to implement those actions?

- Expanded use of canines (Other ways to use agriculture canine. They are used predominantly in passenger arena). Can they be used for snails, cargo arena? The end result of expanded use of canines would be expanded pest detection capabilities. They can also cover more territory in a shorter span of time.
- Cataloging of systems and disseminate to everyone. For example, distribute the message: "On the CBP or USDA Website, you will find the following system information available..."
- Begin joint recruitment efforts focusing, within the next 30 days, on college and technical school applicants.
- Conduct joint outreach events more often--diversify expertise
- Quick tailored training (1-day session, job aid, muster, quick reference guide) for CBPOs specific to air and maritime environment
- Offshore (CSI-Container Security Initiative)
- Share best practices
- Experience exchange (Ag Specialists get a glimpse of what is going on outside of their functions, e.g., on an eradication program where they will associate cause and effect.
- Host meetings for other States/Field Offices. CBP 101 hosted every other year.
- Delays in pest identification heavily impact trade. Evaluate pest identification issues and sift out the ones that can be addressed immediately. Plan the long-term issues. Align identifier resources with the workload. Use digital identifications (CBP IT people have been reluctant to work on the digital technology because the systems are not "approved" in their offices). Create liaison positions for pest id issues. This might also involve review of operations.
- Consider cargo release authority options (e.g., add more products to the National Agriculture Release Program) and "grandfather in" the discard authority for the legacy PPQ officers. PPQ has been reluctant to give the training, and CBP has been reluctant to request it
- Provide training to CBP from the identification staff at the ports
- Allow SPHD to approve commodities for cargo release program according to the local pest situation. Adapt the list to State needs and push the authority down.

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- Detail, on a pilot basis, a CBP Supervisor to PPQ Regional Offices to assess benefits of collocation. Make it someone that can walk that neutral ground and be committed to the agriculture mission
- Also detail an officer from each field office to the targeting center at the Dallas National Targeting Analysis Group (CBP function within Office of Trade)
- Have service ports work with SPHDs and SPROs to identify 3 projects. Give them 60 days to outline objectives with goals to address those projects.
- At GS –15 and above conference (to be held week of June 8) hear from the Port Directors' perspective of what the needs are. Validate our discussions here by working with the Port Director group. Have a panel discussion. Also deliver information about the functions of SPHD and SPRO at the June conference

**Joint Stakeholder Conference
Participant Feedback Review May 1, 2008**

Introduction

The Agriculture Stakeholder Conference was held as a joint partnership event between CBP and the Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service (APHIS) from April 28th through May 1st in Washington D.C. The purpose of the conference was to provide an open forum for dialogue and address agriculture stakeholder concerns. Attendees included representatives from CBP, APHIS, state departments of agriculture, and private industry.

Summary

Overall, the Agriculture Stakeholder Conference received a rating of “Very Good” and was well received by participants. Most agreed that the material content of the conference was informative. However, many comments reflected the need for fewer formal presentations so that more time could be dedicated to participating in the break-out sessions and therefore, increase opportunity for interaction and stakeholder feedback. Another reoccurring issue mentioned revolved around the success stories. Although all comments reviewed indicated participants were pleased with the information, some expressed a need for balance between the success CBP and APHIS has experienced and the lessons learned from failures to show examples of what is not working. This would allow stakeholders the chance to assist in the problem solving process. Very few comments mentioned the facilities but the feedback that was received was very positive and all comments regarding the facilitators consisted of very high praise for their efforts. Based on a review of the overall feedback provided by participants, the Agriculture Stakeholder Conference could be considered very successful in meeting its goals.

Details of Review

Four questions were presented on the feedback forms with a rating scale of “Excellent”, “Very Good”, “Good”, “Fair”, and “Poor”. Participants were asked to rate two questions regarding the topics discussed during the general assembly and success stories/Q and A forum. The next two questions addressed the usefulness of the breakout sessions and the overall quality of the Agriculture Stakeholder Conference. Two additional open-ended questions were asked relating to additional comments that attendees would like to provide, any issues participants would like addressed, and ideas for improvement.

Number of feedback forms submitted by CBP personnel:	2
Number of feedback forms submitted by APHIS personnel:	4
Number of feedback forms submitted by state and private industry stakeholders:	5
Number of anonymous feedback forms:	6
Total number of feedback forms submitted:	17

The four questions utilizing a rating scale (Excellent, Very Good, etc.) were assigned a number between 5 and 1 with a rating of 5 being “Excellent” and a rating of 1 reflecting “Poor” in order to derive an average rating for each response submitted. A rating of .5 or better was rounded up to the next whole number rating.

Average rating for all responses submitted: Very Good (4.1)

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The purpose of the Agriculture Stakeholder Conference was to address the issues and concerns raised by state departments of agriculture and private industry. Focusing on the ratings presented by both the states and private industry, an average rating for those entities that could be identified was also obtained.

Average rating for state representatives and private industry: Very Good (3.9)

In addition to the numerical ratings applied to the first four questions, a representative sample of the comments submitted in relation to these questions are provided below.

Questions:

How do you rate the topics/issues discussed during the General Assembly?

- Too many presentations, not enough opportunities to interact. Task Force and Partnership Council were noted but not described as to membership, roles, and goals.

- Discussing the successes was a good thing. Future sessions should include what is not working to allow the group to discuss and help to solve/prevent those occurrences in the future.

- Very good information in general. Having the Secretaries here was important in letting them know how important we think this issue is but next meeting should have less formal presentations and more breakout discussions.

How would you rate the topics/issues discussed during the Success Stories and Q and A Forum?

- Would like to have lessons learned from failures as a counterpart. Too long a session.

- The success stories are a very positive outcome of the hard work of the Task Force in migrating the agencies together. These should be posted to the website, discussed during the Day 2 summaries.

How would you rate the usefulness of the breakout sessions you attended?

- Very well arranged. Good focus and participation.

- Would like to have had the opportunity to participate in more than one therefore it was somewhat frustrating. It would have been more helpful if these were aligned with what the Task Force recommended.

- As a stakeholder from industry, it was very difficult to engage due to a lack of knowledge and involvement with CBP activities, processes, acronyms, etc. Breakouts should be better described prior to selection by participants.

**Joint Stakeholder Conference
Participant Feedback Review May 1, 2008**

How would you rate the overall quality of the Agriculture Stakeholders Conference?

- Could have compressed into 1 ½ to 2 days.
- Too much time given to presentations and not enough time on interaction or focus on feedback.
- Well worth the time.
- We want all stakeholders and members of agencies to have buy-in to the AQI program so that we can continue to move forward with enhancing the program, hiring more inspectors, improving practices, etc., instead of bickering over moving AQI functions to APHIS. As an association of importers, agriculture inspections affect our members on a daily basis and the health of our industry is related to CBP and APHIS being able to focus on the task of pest risk analysis and inspections.

Along with the comments associated with ratings, the following notable responses to the open-ended questions submitted from both state departments of agriculture and private industry representatives are also provided.

Do you have any other comments that you would like to share?

- Certainly with the change of administration and transition, this is a very timely and important meeting and opportunity to advance the mission.
- We are available at any time in the future to provide feedback, answer questions, etc.
- The partnership council and task force are good and must continue, gain strength, and be listened to. It is very important that the momentum be kept going. We seem to be making incremental improvements that really must continue.

Do you have any issues you would like to have addressed in the near future/ideas for improvement?

- Allow stakeholders to submit suggestions, topics, etc. prior to finalization of future agendas, sessions which may provide valuable insights from industries.
- The NCBFAA currently provides seminars to CBP at FLETC for new officers. We would like to also make this available to officers at Frederick. We believe continuous education is key to the officers regularly at the ports and would like to start a dialogue.